

# THE IMPRISONED GHOSTS

By ELEANOR VAN HORN

The story of a night in a haunted house with wild noises all about, high words and pistol shots

Here is a ghost that is finally traced to its lair and forever laid at rest

LOCAL historians used to call it Whitehall. That was in the days when one of Washington's officers lived there. Then, for immemorial years, the village folk called it the Haunted House. It was a mansion of stately build, approached from the main road by a sweep of imposing driveway. It was large and square, with a pillared porch. Its lofty front windows looked out across a once-beautiful garden, laid out like the gardens of Italy and France. But in the years of mystery and desertion, the garden, like the house, had fallen from grand magnificence into gentle decay. There were tangled masses of exotic flowers run wild. The box borders had been bitten out at intervals by the hungry winters of the past. There was a battered sun-dial, a dead fountain, a moss-covered marble seat, and mysterious paths.

It was here that the village boys and I used to play when the sun shone cheerfully and the day was young. The house exerted its spell upon us. We peered fearfully in at the windows and shook the strong old doors, then scurried away with shrieks of half-frightened ecstasy. The house seemed to submit to these familiarities patiently. But it never lost, not even in the sunshine, that aspect of cheerless, unholy sorrow that made it awful.

Perhaps even then, subconsciously, I knew that I should spend a night of horror behind those white, unsmiling walls when I should have become a man.

## II

Here let me tell you something about the tragedy enacted there.

A quarter of a century before my birth, a wealthy bachelor, a grandson of that officer of Washington's already referred to, came to live at Whitehall, with an old housekeeper as his only attendant. He was not well known in the village, for his youth had been spent in foreign lands, and only till he came to live at Whitehall had the village people ever seen him.

He was tall and imposing, but his handsome face bore clearly the marks of a dissipated and tumultuous life. A scar marked his cheek. He walked with a slight limp from some old wound. He dressed carefully, and bore the aspect of a great gentleman—a man of the world, with an intangible something about him that baffled my

youthful analysis, but which marked him with distinction in sharp contrast to the gentle village folk.

Vague rumors filtered into the village as time went on, which gradually revealed the inhabitant of Whitehall to have been a man of much adventure. He had roamed the wide world over; been in wars as a soldier of fortune; had been imprisoned, and had made his escape; was once an ornamental figure at the court of France, and a destroyer of many a woman's happiness.

His manners were those of a Chesterfield to the last degree, and made no man his friend. He lived entirely within himself. He came and went about the village in that isolation of spirit that some are capable of building up for themselves, and which is as impenetrable as the heart of a Sahara. He received no letters, but many books and magazines and papers. He spent long days in his library. Occasionally he walked in his great garden, gathering the flowers as if he loved them.

Thus he lived until the day of a tragic visit.

In those days a stage-coach carried mails and passengers to and from the village. People came and went every day, and the coach was always sure to be well filled; so that when a mysterious stranger, with a striking face and a foreign accent, was a passenger alighting at the village there were many to carry the news. The stranger's fine, erect figure was set off by a military coat. His beard was cut after a foreign fashion. When he asked at the inn how he might reach Whitehall, the word swiftly passed about that the lonely bachelor was to have a distinguished visitor.

The stranger gave the innkeeper a princely fee and was, in consequence, driven out to Whitehall in the innkeeper's own private chaise by the innkeeper's son. The great door of Whitehall was opened by the old housekeeper, and the mysterious and attractive stranger swallowed from the sight of the youth, who looked longingly after him as he fingered the large silver coin in his hand.

And that night was a night of terror in the village. The old housekeeper had come running wildly to the nearest house in her nightgown, with her eyes staring from her head and her nightcap awry. She was incoherent with terror and exhaustion, but it was gained from her broken speech that a tragedy had taken place at Whitehall, and that the master and his visitor lay dead.

Some of the village men ran to the house, entered the door that had been left wide open by the frightened housekeeper, and went up the stairs to the room the master had converted into a library, led by a light that was still burning.

The room was in great disorder. Sure enough, both men lay dead, their faces bruised and marked. One, the stranger, had been strangled. As for the master, he had evidently shot himself. He lay within a large closet, the door of which stood wide open, and across the sill trickled a stream of crimson. Upon each victim was found a miniature of a woman of extraordinary beauty, her lovely face smiling out coquettishly from within a frame of pearls in one case and a plain gold rim in the other.

Whitehall, after the tragedy, fell to some distant cousins, and they came to live there. They stayed but a short time, however, departing suddenly and leaving a caretaker in charge of the place. The caretaker, in turn, left hastily, declaring that he had heard weird sounds at night, accompanied by two pistol-shots, and that he knew that the ghosts of the two dead men enacted the tragedy every night in the old library.

Then the house was closed. The weeds sprang up in the garden and sprawled into the trim walks, and Whitehall had, within a year, become that strange eerie thing—a haunted house.

## III

When my childhood had passed, and I had traveled about a good deal in foreign lands and learned what fine architecture really was, I realized that

the Haunted House was of rare beauty and excellence, a gem of architecture such as one does not often chance upon in our good land, and so I looked upon its imposing frontage with longing, loving eyes.

I spent several summers in its vicinity in my early thirties, and each day I made it the object of a pilgrimage. I walked about its choked and neglected gardens, and examined its poor, weather-worn door-carvings with a pity that would have penetrated to its heart—had it had one. For Whitehall seemed to me to be weighted down with mortification and despair. The sun might shine its brightest upon its windows, but they never could be made to have that smiling look that the windows of happier houses have.

The spring of the year that I became engaged to Lydia, I paid a visit of a week to the old town, and, of course, to Whitehall. It was a lush season; Nature was doing her very bravest, and the old gardens of Whitehall were struggling to assert themselves. There were surprising clumps of fine, old-fashioned flowers here and there, holding up their beautiful heads, not proudly, but rather triumphantly after all the years of neglect. I grew more and more fascinated with the place; it appealed to me as never before. My being in love may have had a good deal to do with this; but each day I was drawn to the old house, and spent hours about it, and even ob-

tained the keys and wandered into all its rooms, gazing over the rare wood-work and the strong, firm frame; and before I went away I had responded to a sudden inspiration, and had rented the place for a year, with the privilege of purchasing. The price was ridiculously low, the haunting spirits that one was obliged to take with it being considered detrimental to the real-estate value.

I was to be married in July, and here I would bring my bride. I knew what a wonderful and joyful surprise it would be to Lydia—for she regarded all superstition with fine scorn. And what a place for a honeymoon! What romance that garden offered, what delight was promised in those grand old rooms, still stocked with gems of antique furniture, moth-eaten and dust-laden to be sure, but not beyond restoration. I left directions for its setting in order, and hired a brave man to make trim the gardens.

At last, we came to our own. The joy of those first weeks will remain a honeyed memory forever. We arranged and admired and recovered and repolished to our own particular taste until our artistic sense was completely satisfied. We worked and dreamed away the hours and talked much of the history of the place, laughing at the absurdity of the haunted idea and pitying the narrow beliefs of the simple people; but, at the same time, rejoicing over them because of the wealth of beauty they had contributed to our lives.

In September, Lydia was called to the bedside of her sister. She took the maid with her. The cook, who was left to take care of me, went to her own little home each night, so that I was quite alone in the house after nine o'clock. I was lonely, as a new bridegroom would be sure to be during such a separation, but I was happy enough in my own way.

The day before Lydia returned I received a call from one of the old residents of the town—the older inhabitant, I fancied, from his shriveled and faded condition. I welcomed him as a character. He came in the bright afternoon, but seemed wary about entering the house, even with the glorious sunshine pouring in at the windows in a flood, and said he preferred a seat in the garden. He walked feebly, leaning heavily on a stout stick, and breathlessly assured me that he would not have made so great an effort had he not been impelled by an overpowering curiosity as to whether we had been troubled by ghostly noises, and also by the desire to tell me that this was the anniversary of the tragedy. It was a windy September night that it happened, he said, and he quite remembered how Aunt Sally Waite shivered and shook in her nightgown when she brought the horrible news.

I cheerfully assured him that we had not seen or heard anything of a disquieting nature, and had no fear whatever.

He waved his palsied fingers warningly, and feebly shook his head as he said impressively "You will yet, young man, you will. It's never failed to come on the night of the anniversary. You'll hear and see things to-night. This house has been haunted for nigh on fifty years, and them that's lived here has always heard wild noises—groans and curses, high words, struggling, pistol-shots—two pistol-shots!"

Then, with a dramatic fervor that seemed like the good old man's last effort on this earth, he graphically rehearsed every detail of the ancient tragedy. In spite of myself, I felt all its horror and its reality.

When he had finished, he departed, creeping slowly away with many a backward look and ominous shakings of the head. I have to confess that he left a depressing effect, and I felt very lonely without Lydia. The golden days that we had reveled in seemed very far away; and much as I disliked to think of the gruesome past, I could not refrain from dwelling upon it with an awful fascination.

As night came near, I found myself a prey to all the terrors of my youthful imaginings. Whitehall again became the Haunted House; and in spite of all of my efforts to stave it off, I was fast falling into a fit of the blues. By the time that the clock struck I was genuinely depressed. The wind sprang up and moaned and sobbed dolefully about the house, sighing in the chimney and shrieking wildly under the eaves. I read very late, plunging into the lively action of the spirited *Vi-comte de Bragelonne*, and hoped, like Stevenson, to carry the thread of that epic into my slumbers.

When midnight struck, the brands of the fire flashed up. Then went out. I laid down my stirring romance, stretched and yawned, and decided to go to bed and sleep off my hapless mood.

I got up and moved about the room noisily, whistled and sang, swept up the hearth, locked the doors and windows, and tried not to hear the fiendish wind. But I could not deny it. I was the victim of such a disquieting nervous tension as I had never before experienced in all my life.

When I got to bed I huddled under the blankets and watched the cold moonlight flooding across the floor—the very floor, I thought, upon which the tragedy took place; for my bedroom had been the unfortunate master's library. I was happy to find myself really growing drowsy, and was just on the verge of slumber when I was suddenly shocked wide-awake by a sharp report near at hand.

"A pistol-shot!" I whispered, my flesh creeping with an anomalous species of terror; for the sound came from the large closet in which the unfortunate inhabitant of Whitehall had died. It was now used as a storage closet.

I had half decided that my over-stimulated fancy had been playing me a trick, and was about to settle back upon my pillow, when another report, louder, clearer, sharper, came from the region of the closet, and made me jerk back to my sitting position.

"Two pistol-shots," I said to myself in an ominous whisper, recalling the old man's words.

All of a sudden I grasped hold of my senses and got back my manhood. A keen disgust of myself hastening my actions. I jumped out of bed, lighted the lamp, and made my way toward the closed door of the closet. I held the lamp rather high and its light shed itself sharply downward upon the floor where my eyes were attracted to something within its rays. I stooped—spreading slowly out across the sill from beneath the door was a crimson stain.

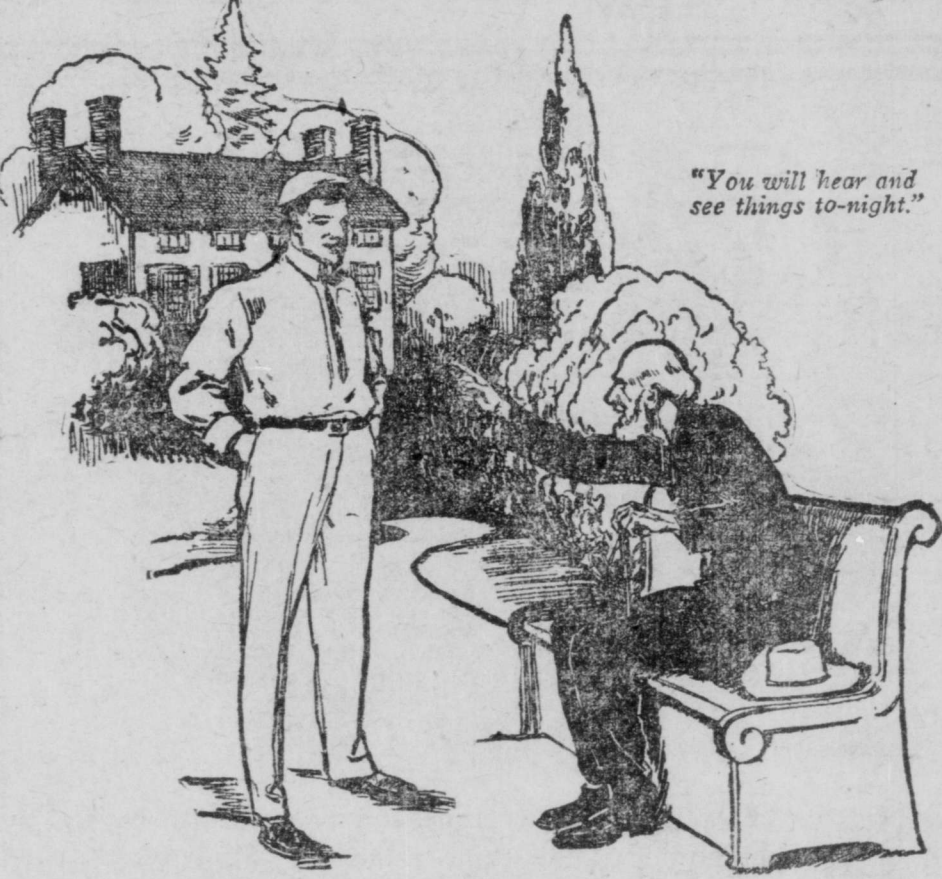
"Blood!" I whispered hoarsely, and my own ran cold. My terror returned. I felt a sudden ghastly faintness, and I nervously moistened my dry lips with my tongue. The hand holding the lamp shook as with an ague, and this seemed to arouse me to a sense of my weakness. I felt as if I had disgraced myself by the weak fears and nervous oscillations of this night, and suddenly stung back into strength and courage by shame, I put out a steady hand and turned the knob. The door was locked. I shook it loudly and peered into the keyhole. There was no key within.

However, I was now determined to fathom the mystery, and, shivering in my thin nightclothes, I gathered keys from various doors up-stairs and tried them in the lock. The last one grated a little and then slid back, and the door was unlocked. I set my teeth a little and held my breath with excitement as I swung back the door, holding the light well forward and peering within. For a moment I could see nothing, and then meeting my eager gaze was a row of preserve-jars, two of which had broken from fermentation and sent forth a crimson stream of fruit-juice!

"Lydia's preserves!" I said, and, setting the lamp down on the shelf, I gave myself up to a fit of uproarious laughter.

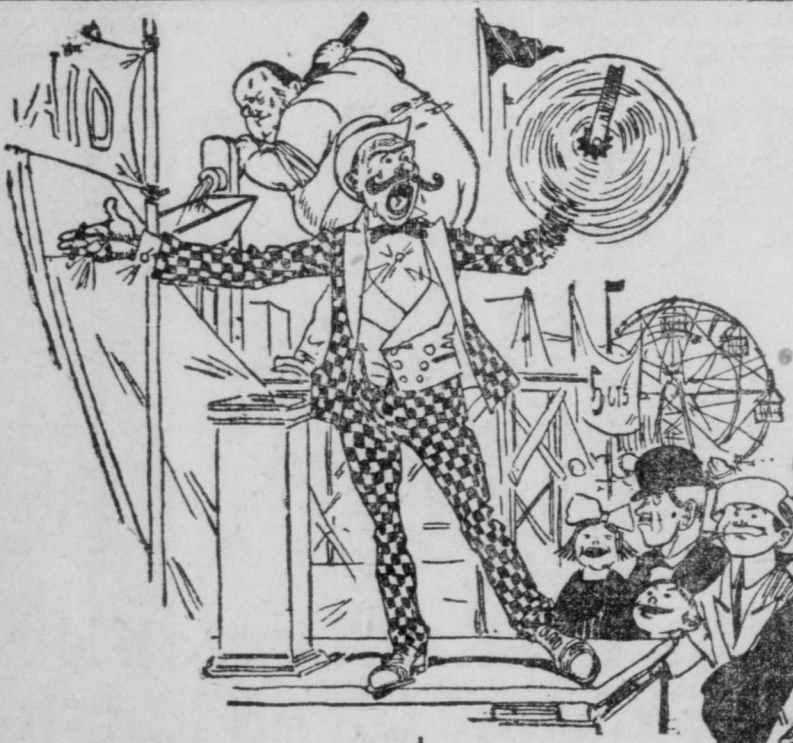
It is Lydia's chief story. She revels in the telling of it, but I do not mind. It gave me a glimpse into a night and we pride ourselves upon being the owners of one of the most beautiful old houses in the land.

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# THE MERMAID

By George Allan England



HURRY! Hurry! Hurry! She's here! Here! Have you seen her, ladies? Gentleman? Th' mermaid. Only a nickel—half a dime. An' captured alive in th' China Sea by Colonel Webb. That's right, Jack, give her plenty o' fresh, pure water. Th' mermaid! Th' mermaid! Five cents admits to everything. Ker-ak-k-k-k-k-k-k!

"All th' papers talkin' about her! Everybody sees her! And only half a dime to all! Just a little more water, Jack, fer th' China Sea gasteropodinous phenomenon!"

Off to one side, on a kind of scaffold, stands Jack. He's red-wattled and will kick the beam at two hundred and fifty; and he's pumpin' water in a trough. It sloshes down through a hole in th' painted tent.

"Gee!" says I.

Then I does a wriggle through the bunch of open-faced jaspers.

"Me for her!" says I, plunkin' down. Few nickels I had, at that; but I couldn't miss a Chinese mermaid, nix!

"Me for th' mermaid!"

"Pass right on the inside," barks the proprietor, harvestin' my coin. "On the inside, the inside! She's here, here, here!"

I passes on the inside. It's hotter than the Hinges, in there under canvas. Two or three rubber-plants in blossom over a red cloth screen, obsovin' a Fake—an' the big F goes, too! Five foot long she is, that mermaid, reposin' on a pedestal; she has squigzled lamps, fish-teeth glued in, cocoanut-fiber hair, an' a brown hide cracked in places so the hay shows. I shoots one look into her, an' does a quick reverse.

"Say!" I registers a kick with th' township, "I wants that nickel back, an' wants it sudden, see?"

"On your way!" he growls at me. "Th' confiners for you!"

About that time, Jack has quit his fresh-pure-water stunt and is closing in on me. There's a mix, and Jack an' me finds ourselves tangled on the ground.

I breaks away, sits up an' looks at him. He ditto at me. Th' big, round mob ditto at both of us. Then, suddenly, I falls to who he really is.

"Why, Beef Westerhood!" says I, rubbin' my shoulder where the ground flopped up an' pasted it. "Why—Beef! That you? Where's th' whiskers you used to float? An' why this unfamiliar corporeity? Is it you, or who is it?"

He scans me faithful a minute, herdin' together his memories; then his face folds into a grin, and out comes th' joyous palm at me.

"Sim!"

"Beef!"

Twelve years that we ain't so much as batted an eye on each other is bridged in a wink, while th' crowd stretches red, gordy necks.

"I'm sure astounded," I murmurs to him, dustin' off my raiments, "to find you engaged in a faked-breakfast-fodder brace game. You, you of all honest fakirs, perpetratin' a mermaid!"

"Fergit it!" he whispers, withdrawin' me inside the tent, away from that over-inquisitive bunch of horny-handers. "Fergit it! Times has underwent painful changes since you an' me paraded up Popularity Avnue to the rattle of a pill in a walnut-shell. It's a case with me of gaff what's offered, now, an' no comers barred. But," he adds wistful, "can you improve this here lay? You always was snappy with th' thinks. Can you dope ginger into our modest attempt to put th' jacks under this rural currency?"

"Can I? Well, some!"

"Fine an' dandy! Percolate round to-night after th' Pike closes. I'll knock you down to th' boss, an' we'll rag-chew. Just now, it's Beefy to th'

pump. But to-night you'll fall round?"

"I guess yes."

Then we clinches again, an' separates.

That's how I gets the job, see?—the job as mermaid.

It was simply a scream; twenty-five per, an' no toll to dally with—notin' to do but float or paddle or snooze in a tin tank of water, now bonny-fiddy supplied by Beef an' his pump. Get wet? Wet nothin'! I had a padded rubber suit, green, with bunches of seaweed all over it. By keepin' my back to the come-ons, an' loafin' round mostly under water, all but my head, th' game we played sent all the rest of the Pikers skurryn' for the high wood. Crowds? Never did pipe such crowds. Looked like th' boss would make a million. He doubled Beef's pay th' second week, and come up to thirty-five on mine.

It's a good job, in spite of everythin', even includin' old ladies with sharp umbrellas, an' kids with peanuts what I have to snap at. A good job, an' good business. A mob, most all the time—so much of a mob that th' prof. hires another outside man an' tends exclusively to his new lecture on deep-sea marvels. It's two hours on, an' half an hour's rest, thirty-five per, an' all expenses.

"If it lasts," thinks I, "it's me to the banker class in the directory, that's sure. I'll get th' coupon-cutting habit," says I, "if nothin' sands my bearings! Oh, joy!"

Then I flips my tail, turns my quid, and muzzles against th' professor's long pointer.

"Kindly, affectionate critters they be, these here marine mermaid marvels of th' China Sea, known to science as

the 'Subaquatic Humaniformus,' says he, reachin' over and strokin' my snout. "Highly intelligent, too. Go fetch, Lucy!" An' he heaves a piece o' wood for me to retrieve.

"Most unfortunate, they require a dim light, like in th' caves an' fastnesses of their native abodes among th' coral reefs," says he, "or you could mark an' behold the iridescent colors an' beautiful contours of this extraordinary large specimen, captured alive after a desprit struggle by Colonel Lysander Webb, K.C.B., on the 27th of last March, off th' coast of Van Diemen's Land, in th' China Sea—and now exhibited at tremendous expense—only one ever in captivity! They don't survive long in fresh water," says he, pointin' at the spot where Beef Westerhood is puttin' in his best licks, "and direct daylight is fatal to 'em immejit. We will now pass out, ladies an' gents, to permit another audience in to witness this, the greatest marvel of all the ages. Kindly pass on the outside, ladies! Gentleman! On the outside! The outside!"

It used to be, "Pass on the inside!" but now it's tough work to keep th' mob shiffin' at all. Fact is, we're the broad-gauge dream-pill pushers of the Pike inside of a week, the only original charter-members of the Get There Club. All the others had to take our dust; Shamdown the Chain-breaker, Mme. Claire the Medium, Moscow the Snake King, an' all—specially Moscow. I used to know Moscow, y'understand, when his name was MacShane, an' you could put all the love lost between us in your eye without seein' none the worse; so it didn't worry me much about his business goin' to the blinks. Oh, I tell you, the mermaid bunch was just swamped in a tidal-wave of rejoicin'.

We sure was goin' some! But it's just this way, place of ours that cut the final crimp in our gears—so you'll see all in its good an' proper time. Don't rush the hearse.

For, one day along the beginnin' of our third week since the boss grew a spike-tail coat an' the title of professor, I notices this same Moscow MacShane in among the bunch of E. Z. Marx. There's a difference between them an' him, though, and it don't look extra salubrious, neither. They're all standin' with open traps, gorgin' the prof's science, while he's lurkin' by the far end of the tank, deaf to the spiel, but all there with the optics. And as he pipes me he smiles contented, in a way that gives me a sudden attack of blighted hope.

That smile makes me feel like bein' dropped from the top story in one o' them sudden elevators; I grows and his pointer to make me paddle an' retrieve. And all th' time I'm performin', Moscow is givin' me sensations like when you sprinkle sugar on oysters. My blood's runnin' cold enough to freeze th' tank.

Well, we does our little bit, th' prof. and me, and then it comes time to clear the tent.

"On the outside! The outside!" orates the prof., herdin' out the cattle. They all jostles out—all but Moscow. He crouches down around the far corner of the tank an' stays.

When the tent is full of emptiness, up he bobs, leans over the edge of th' tank, and "Sim," says he, "Sim," it's a real huge IT, this mimical con of yours, marked up as the greatest ever, and calculated to pull down more coin than anybody can have an' be decent. But! (he waggles his head at me) "But now let me tell you honest, it ain't quite artistic enough, an' that's the livin'." For example—"Gwan!" I growls at him. "Clear out! No man what handles fangless reptiles has any call—"

"Dear me, such language!" he protests, mild as rabbit's milk. "I'm discomfited, honest I am, to hear such from a lady mermaid! An', moreover, just think how imprudent it would be of you to holler—now wouldn't it? Sort of shake public confidence, an' all that, eh? Down Lucy, down, there's a good, nice lady mermaid!"

He reaches out an' hits me a crack over the sea-weed on my brow with his long cane.

"Down, Lucy, down!" he repeats; and his tone for pure A-One insultin'ness was th' top-nitcher of all time. "I ain't through with you yet," says he, resum'n' his mild manners. "Compose yourself; there's another bunch of E. Z.'s due in three minutes. See you to-morrow," says he, "and we will resume the sport. Mermaid huntin'—nothin' like it, greatest ever!"

Must ha' changed his mind about waitin' till to-morrow—maybe thought I'd put th' prof. wise, an' have him excluded, which I sure would have done—for, anyhow, back he comes inside of an hour, an' with him a couple of huskies with such low brows that their hair tangs their eyelashes. The three of 'em fronts up to our tank, along of a big an' spellbound crowd; an' none o' the audience seems more plumb interestred than them three. Moscow's relieved looks bulgy.

The prof. he seems uneasy and on his guard. I notices the stream of water ain't comin' in, and judges Beef is bein' held as a reserve for immejit action in case o' need. My nerves is all to the dippy, so I can't hardly do my stunts at all, and the prof. has to more than prod. Every time I flips or dives, "Gee!" thinks I, "this here is just prolongin' the agony. I'm sure workin' a shell-game on myself," thinks I, an' the sweat begins to ooze. An' every time I comes up, there still stands Moscow MacShane and his L. B.'s, just smilin'—smilin'.

That bulgy sleeve freezes me. "Make her dive again, professor!" speaks up one of the L. B.'s, innocent like, tossin' a penny in. "See if she can find it on th' bottom. She can see best in a dim light, can't she?"

"Iridescent colors an' beautiful contours of this extraordinary large specimen," hastens the prof., tryin' to bring his lecture to a speedy finish. "An' captured alive after a desprit struggle by Colonel Lysander Webb, K.C.B., on the 27th of last—"

"Say, prof., butts in the other L. B., "how long can she stay down?"

"She requires a dim light, like all the specie," forges the prof., neck an' neck with that ominous curiosity of th' Moscow gang. "Lives in dark ocean caves an' fastnesses, which is their native abode among th' coral reefs! And now we will pass—"

"Under water they live?" inquires the first L. B. again. "In caves, you say? Far down among them beautiful coral reefs?"

"Why—er—yes," answers th' prof., his voice almost breakin' with suppressed torture. Th' crowd begins to shove an' whisper. "But you—you understand, it's salt water—of course it is, out there on th' coasts of Van Diemen's Land in th' China Sea. Everybody knows that. Salt water—an' that makes a difference—"

"No such thing!" retorts the L. B., pullin' out a book from his pocket. "I got a volume here, wrote by Colonel Webb himself, where he says—lemme find th' place, page 156—he says—"

"Never you mind what Colonel Webb says!" flares out the prof. "Ain't I been handlin' mermaids daily an' hourly for the past eleven years? Don't I know their habits? We will now pass on the outside. The outside—"

"Hold on! Hold on!" says the L. B., polite an' easy. Not a soul starts for the outside. Contrarywise, they crowds up closer than ever, till it's a regulation sardine-pack. Some laughs, an' I hears confused scraps of talk. "If this here Mermaid Lucy's caught alive after a desprit struggle, last 27th o' March, first an' only one in captivity, how comes it that—"

"Don't pester him!" speaks up Moscow, soothin'-like. "That's a matter of mere detail. What interests this here intelligent audience now is just this—how long can a genuine mermaid stay under water? Now prof., it's a fact you!"

"That's right—right!" I hears th' crowd repeat. "How long? Make her try it. Money's worth! Hold 'er under—"

"Say, am I sweatin' blood, or ain't I?" "We will now pass—" begins the prof. again, all of a tremble an' rubbin' his chin with a shaky hand; but Moscow interrupts once more:

"We don't press the point. It's immaterial—an' besides, Lucy ain't well to-day. She's ailin'—I know it by her looks—ailin' and nervous. But somethin' we would like to know is: what she feeds on? There, professor, her diet; what is it?"

"Diet?" answers the prof., his spirits risin' like an oil-gusher. "Diet? Fish, mostly—fish and—and—"

"Eels?" volunteers Moscow. "If so, I have here—"

"Eels, yes. Eels and—and such. Anythin' marine, you understand. Certainly. Marine food, that's it, such as grows natural on them there coasts of Van—"

"Hang th' diet!" speaks up L. B. Number 1. "I wants to see her stay under water!"

"Same here!—An' here!" persists the crowd, which now is gettin' unruly an' hilarious. All this time, y'understand, I'm in a despair so black it makes soot snow-white by comparison. "Make 'er stay down! Down!" shouts some of that jostlin', pushin' mob. "Feed 'er!" vociferates others.

The poor old prof.—say, I had to pity him, spite o' my own bloody sweat. He grips his resolution, leans over an' pats me lovin' on the nozzle. "Dive, Lucy!" he commands in a tremblin' voice. "Dive, an' stay down—a spell."

"Here's my speedy end," thinks I, but I'll croak game. An' Lord help th' fish they flings to me! I gnashes my teeth preparatory to doin' murder viciously on Moscow MacShane in the person of said fish. It's all dark an' slippery down there on th' bottom; can't more than see a glimmer. From above I hear a rumble o' voices.

Then all of a sudden I sees somethin' swimmin' round—kind of a fish-thing, big an' brown. My lungs feel like they was just plumb goin' to bust every second, but I makes a grab at the fish-thing, misses, makes another, lands on it with my left, grapples with my right, closes in and grips till my knuckles crack. I feels the fish-critter give; there's a sudden lash an' tangle—the water boils.

And then—then—Gee Whillikens! Ow! Ow! Oooooo!—Somethin' explodes. Somethin' hits me. What is it? Where am I? Sparks an' fire envelope me! Can't let go—an' I'm all tied up in bow-knots myself. Jumpin' jewsharps! 'Bout a million volts of red-hot current racks my frame. Whoof!—Up I surges, blind, deaf, chokin'.

Plumb in the eye MacShane lands me one. Head over tail, down I souses under water again, gulps a gallon an' comes up just explodin' with a whoof! whoof! that blows th' drink clean over that hilarious mob of outthroats. But this time the prof. has unlithered. Beef comes a shovin' and the outside man, too—there's reinforcements. I makes my get-out on my map, outside, and lays spranglin', all tied up in my tail 'mongst the feet of that stampeidin', fightin', roarin' multitude.

Mac, he drives a kick at me just as Beef hands him a right hook on the ear. He drops. I'm top of him in a wink, and the L. B.'s, the prof., the outside man an' Beef is top of us both. An' after that it's just pure cannibalism, with th' mob weepin' itself sick fer joy, an' screechin' "Perlice!"

"Perlice? Sure they come—after a while. But there's no tent left, nothin' but ribbons.

Fact is, all th' good them perlice done was shoot that there mermaid food o' mine—that eel—that there million-volt electric eel.

Say, you tumble?

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